

Random Encounters

Ways of the Sword

By Robert Wiese



Cat's Claw Dueling Pride

In a remote part of the city, near its edge, one finds what appears to be a zoo or animal farm. Its sign boasts that it is the Cat's Claw Dueling Pride, and an inquirer would find that it is in fact a school of dueling rather than just a club. Within, students learn the ways of fighting like a cat, but with the rapier or longsword.



The owner of this school, and its chief teacher, is a man who is fascinated with, and obsessed with, cats. Thus, all kinds of cats populate Miromar's school beside the humanoid occupants. The cats are friendly toward Miromar, who is a catlord, but not so much with the students. This, and city laws, requires that the felines be caged. However, there is a large open field where they spend much of their time, safely separated from the city's population.

Their presence is necessary to teach the students. When students come to the school, they are let loose in the field with the large cats. Those who flee or show fear are dismissed. The ones that stay are enrolled as kittens and spend their first years studying the animals and how they move, and trying to emulate the cats. When Miromar has decided that they have succeeded, the student graduates to the second level of training, swordcats. At this level they study fencing techniques and merge them with the cat movements they learned as kittens. Students more interested in the cats than in fighting are trained in a different part of the school to take up the mantle of catlord.

Students that pass the second level of training in either discipline are graduated to the rank of catclaw, the highest level a student achieves in this school. These students master the intricacies of whichever path they have chosen and gain experience in the world by going on "quests" for the school or for Miromar personally. These "quests" are chosen for their likelihood of reinforcing training and of causing the student to use his or her training in new ways. Once the students are deemed ready, they are given an examination. If they pass it, they graduate from the school.

Students of the Cat's Claw frequently get into trouble, as the ways of a cat are individualistic and contrary. Miromar sees the students who get into trouble as the most like cats, and therefore the most praiseworthy, so long as they were not trying specifically to get into trouble. A cat will sometimes do something because it is wrong, but most often will just do something because it wants to. That is the attitude that Miromar would like to see developed in his students. Thus, many of his students come to have a chaotic neutral alignment by the time they graduate.

Like the Way of the Flashing Blade, Miromar employs a wizard to develop spells and potions for the students. He got the idea from Tendra's practice, but claims it is his own. Potions are sold to students and the public, but the spells are not taught to other wizards.

Feline Distraction

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One creature

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes

Feline distraction causes the target to become afflicted with a cat's curiosity for the irrelevant. The target ignores opponents or real threats in favor of chasing motes of dust, insects, or imagined small objects (or even performing multiple gravity experiments with various objects by knocking them off their resting spot and onto the floor). Roll on the following table:

1d10 Behavior

| | |
|-----|--|
| 1-4 | Follow something interesting away from the scene for 2 rounds (unless prevented) |
| 5-8 | Gaze in fascination at a spot on the wall for 1 round |
| 9 | Seek out an object on a surface and knock it off the surface (until an object is found or up to 1 minute, whichever comes first) |
| 10 | Act normally for 1 round. |

Except on a result of 1, roll again each round to see what the subject does that round. Attackers are not at any special advantage when attacking a subject. Behavior is checked at the beginning of the subject's turn. Any distracted creature who is attacked automatically attacks its attackers

on its next turn.

The material component is a piece of string, which the caster waves at the target.

Bringing the Parts Together

Aside from becoming involved with the dueling pride through its conflicts with the Way of the Flashing Blade Academy, the characters might come here to learn the animal lord (cat) prestige class, pick up some druid lore, or learn the ways of the arcane duelist prestige class. It might be a place to rest for the night. The characters might be hired to escort some beginning students on a trip to interact with wild beasts or to take a message for the pride to some ally in a distant land.

Coming in Part 4 of Ways of the Sword

See the proprietors of the two opposing academies.

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